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The Wabanakis/Abanakis

Alvin Hablen Morrison
SUNY College at Fredonia

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The Wabanakis of Maine and the Maritimes. By Maine Indian Program. (Bath, Me.: American Friends Service Committee, P. O. Box 1096, 04530, 1989. Pp. 512. Paper or looseleaf. \$15.)

The Abenaki. By Colin G. Calloway. Indians of North America Series. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989. Pp. 112. \$16.95.)

Maine schoolteachers have been waiting decades for scholarship about the Wabanaki Algonquian peoples to develop sufficiently to produce comprehensive school books like these. Now the current florescence of Wabanaki studies has demonstrated its coming-of-age by refining its findings for school children. By luck, each of these two new textbooks complements the other — in geographical coverage, in intended age of readers, and in emphasis of either cultural or historical approach.

While “Wabanaki” and “Abenaki” both translate as “Dawnlanders,” the former is the more generic term. “Wabanaki” includes (from east to west) Micmac, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Abenaki (proper), and Pennacook (now extinct, *per se*). These closely interrelated peoples of the Algonquian Language Family occupied the region north to the Gaspe Peninsula, east to Cape Breton Island, south to Cape Ann, and west to Lake Champlain. “Abenaki” usually excludes the three easternmost peoples above. The MIP’s book focuses on Maine but extends far beyond, while Calloway’s book emphasizes Vermont but encompasses Maine as well. Thus Maine is covered by both books, and all of its surroundings are included in one or the other.

The Friends’ Maine Indian Program used the expertise of a very long list of persons, both Indian and non-Indian, to produce and classroom-test its comprehensive cultural “resource book ... with lesson plans for grades 4 through 8.” Yet the book need not stop there; the introduction correctly notes that it “is for anyone who is interested in learning more about Wabanaki people.” The sections are entitled “Historical Overview” (from



"Devil's Half Acre," Mt. Desert, about 1900. Abenaki families colonized this small point during the summer, when they sold handicrafts and offered canoe lessons in the island's resorts and summer colonies. Photo courtesy Bar Harbor Historical Society.

Ice Age to present day), "Lesson Plans" (over 50, on very many topics, all well cross-referenced), "Readings" (legends, stories from the past, interviews with Wabanaki persons today, children's essays), "Fact Sheets" (mapping, material culture, political-social-spiritual life, colonial life, things to try), "Resources-Bibliography-Index" (even including a videotape order form for the six-program MI'KMAQ series described therein). Black-and-white photos, line drawings, diagrams, maps, and historical outlines abound. A 33 1/3 rpm phonograph "soundsheet" contains language pronunciation information and several songs. If only for its encyclopedic reference value, let alone the pedagogical, this book is a gem.

Historian Colin Calloway resides in Vermont, on leave from University of Wyoming to teach in Dartmouth College's Native American Studies Program. He has testified in Vermont Abenaki land claims cases, and formerly taught at Springfield (VT) High School. His book is one of over fifty volumes in a series intended for middle- and high-school students. This is a unified account of "The People of the Dawnland," their "Society, Art, and Culture," intrusive "Traders, Diseases, and

Missionaries,” resulting in “Wars and Migrations,” yet nonetheless “The Survival of the People,” and “The Abenaki Today.” Twisting but persisting, through time and space, the interrelated Abenaki groups of northern New England and southernmost Quebec are now politically resurgent.

Calloway’s assignment was to tell their story simply, from the dynamics of the colonial “triple” Abenaki/French/English frontier to those of today: Abenaki/Canada/USA. He has done so, admirably. His Vermont perspectives challenge some Mainers’ assumptions. For instance, Odanak (St. Francis) and Wolinak (Becancour) — the two historic Abenaki relocation centers in Quebec — really are closer to Vermont than to Maine. Lovewell’s or Dummer’s War in Maine, which brought Abenaki defeats, had its mid-1720s counterpart in Grey Lock’s War from Vermont, which sent unstoppable Abenaki raids southward repeatedly. Calloway’s attractive volume is profusely illustrated, including 14 color photos, several maps, and diagrams. It has usage potential well beyond high school.

So, finally, here are the books!

Alvin Hamblen Morrison
SUNY College at Fredonia

The Wood & Canvas Canoe: A Complete Guide to Its History, Construction, Restoration, and Maintenance. By Jerry Stelmok and Rollin Thurlow. (Gardiner, Me.: Harpswell Press, 1987. Pp. 181. \$15.95.)

Maine’s inland waters play a more significant role in the state’s history than is generally recognized, and canoes were a key vehicle in the days when rivers were the roads. In commenting about the earliest development of this craft, the authors tell us that “nothing nearly as elegant or versatile was developed by cultures in other parts of the world with similar climate and terrain, though in many cases the materials were at hand and the need obvious.” Indeed Cartier, Champlain, and other early